

Fightback

Dec - Jan 2013

Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

**Roastbusters,
rape culture
& the
problem
of criminality**

**USA: Socialist election
campaigns create
shock waves**

**Fighting
Rape Culture
in Aotearoa:
A Survivor's
Perspective**

The climate crisis

**Pseudoscience
and the left**

**Gramsci's
relevance today**

\$2

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Fightback magazine is now in its 20th year as we continue the long-term fight for socialism. Readers and supporters may consider remembering us in their will with assets or money that will help the struggle in the long-term. If this is you please put in your will 'Fightback, PO Box 10-282, Dominion Road, Auckland' as well as what you would like to leave to us.

Editorial

Welcome to the final issue of Fightback for 2013.

Fightback does not take money from the state or big business, and sustaining a monthly anti-capitalist publication during this period is no easy feat. For these reasons we thank our buyers, subscribers, and everyone who has contributed to Fightback over the last year.

In November, Aotearoa/NZ saw a nationwide day of action against rape culture, which Fightback supported because we see the struggle for gender liberation as essential to the struggle for socialism. Thousands gathered in Auckland and Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Palmerston North and Hamilton to voice their opposition to both sexual violence, and the system that enables it

In the lead-up to the rape culture rallies, the self-titled 'Roastbusters,' teenage boys who carried out a series of sexual assaults and then boasted about it on Facebook, had found mainstream media attention. Crucially, it transpired that not only had the police known about the boys for two years, and received four complaints, they did nothing to investigate the case; one of the boys was an officer's son.

While the state and other reactionary forces used this opportunity to call for greater surveillance power, feminist, socialist and progressive forces highlighted how this was not an isolated incident. Rather, the

police cover-up illuminated the wider problem of 'rape culture,' an ingrained system which justifies and denies sexual violence.

Sexual violence exists throughout society, even in nominally progressive organisations. Challenging this violence is necessary to human liberation. Fightback covers perspectives on rape culture, gendered violence and the Roastbusters case from pages 4-11.

Meanwhile in the USA, Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant was the first openly socialist candidate to win a Seattle City Council seat in decades. While this is a modest victory, it shows both a shift in consciousness in an environment historically hostile to socialist politics, and the benefits of sustained work in the community.

In her council position Sawant will have little power to implement her policies such as a \$15 minimum wage, however she is using the platform to promote socialist politics. At her election night party, Sawant took the opportunity to call for workers' control of factories owned by Boeing, which is the biggest employer in the state, currently threatening to move jobs out of the region. Fightback reprints more detailed coverage of Sawant's campaign from pages 12-14.

We'll be back next year.

Solidarity.

About Fightback

Under our current system, democracy consists of a vote every 3 years. Most of our lives are lived under dictatorship, the dictatorship of bosses and WINZ case managers. Fightback stands for a system in which our workplaces, our schools, our universities are run democratically, for social need rather than private profit.

Fightback participates in the MANA Movement, whose stated mission is to bring "rangatiratanga to the poor, the powerless and the dispossessed." Capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa through colonisation, and the fight for indigenous self-determination is intimately connected with the fight for an egalitarian society. We also maintain an independent Marxist organisation outside of parliament, to offer a vision of a world beyond the parliamentary capitalist system.

Fightback stands against all forms of oppression. We believe working-class power, the struggle of the majority for self-determination, is the basis for ending all forms of oppression. However, we also recognise that daily inequities such as sexism must be addressed here and now, not just after the revolution.

Fightback is embedded in a range of struggles on the ground; including building a fighting trade union movement, movements for gender and sexual liberation, and anti-racism.

Fightback also publishes a monthly magazine, and a website, to offer a socialist perspective on ongoing struggles.

Fightback stands for struggle, solidarity and socialism.

Fightback
Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

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Roastbusters, rape culture and the problem of criminality



By Anne Russell. Reprinted from Scoop.co.nz.

Trigger warning: rape, discussion of victim-blaming.

It is, unfortunately, a truism that the older you get, the more of your friends have been raped. Although popular narratives suggest that rape victims are easy to identify, many of these friends will never be known to you. It takes time for the victim to process what has happened, get past the frequent self-blaming and start their healing process. If they then tell someone, by this time the bruise marks have often faded, if there were any to begin with, and admissible legal evidence is sketchy. Even when rape victims actually want their rapists to go to jail, many are put off go-

ing to the police by the victim-blaming and retraumatisation that frequently happens during questioning, with only a slim chance of a conviction.

This is not to say that the police are incapable of being good allies to rape survivors, or that victims should never go to the police for help. But anti-rape advocates have known for a long time that the police aren't often the first port of call for rape survivors. In many cases, the function of the police is to deal with problems that we're unable or unwilling to fix ourselves. As such, it's telling that most of the public debate around the Roastbusters group has focused on how the police should deal with the problem. Many have expressed shock and anger that the police knew about the page for two years but didn't do anything. The police attempted to excuse this with

a claim that they were unable to act without a victim's statement; but it has since emerged that four girls have come forward to the police since 2011. While such mutually supportive accounts build a comparatively strong base of evidence, it is clear that the police do not take such statements seriously. In the case of one of the girls, after making her re-enact her rape with dolls, the police told her that her case was inadmissible owing to lack of evidence and the short skirt she was wearing at the time. The idea of police as bastions of justice is clearly flawed when they won't prevent children from being raped.

I say 'won't' rather than 'can't', because these people are middle class adults with state-granted powers of surveillance power at their hands. It wasn't impossible for the police to dig up

internet and telecommunications evidence to use against the Urewera 17, and yet the Roastbusters' open admissions of rape were not enough for them to even report the page to Facebook. While some suspect that the inaction on Roastbusters is related to the fact that one of them is the son of a cop, this sort of inertia is all too common in police conduct around rape cases. It's not a coincidence that an institution that frequently upholds misogynist power and violence—as in the rape of Louise Nicholas by police in 1984, not to mention ongoing prison rape statistics—is ill-equipped to understand or dismantle the misogynist power and violence that shapes rape culture.

When asked about the case, John Key expressed disgust and said that the Roastbusters crew needed to “grow up” (as though adults don't rape). He indicated that the government would be advancing the Harmful Digital Communications Bill in response, wherein posting rape videos online could be interpreted as a crime. This creates a worrying discourse whereby the further extension of surveillance powers is framed as necessary for the safety of young girls—if we oppose the bill we're supporting rapists and rape culture. Despite such abuses of state power, even committed leftists who otherwise chant “fuck the police” often pressure rape victims to make formal complaints, whether the survivors feel it would aid their recovery or not.

The cultural focus on whether or not the Roastbusters' acts legally count as rape is part of an attempt to treat them as an anomaly, neatly dividing the world into Evil Rapists and Good Non-Rapists. If the accused rapist is found guilty in a court of law they can be sent to jail, wherein many people view prison rape as a fitting retribution, and we can forget about them—the problem is sitting in a remote cell. If they are not, their friends can keep inviting them to parties without discussing the violence they've committed because it's too

awkward.

Unfortunately, the legal system of “innocent until proven guilty” is not particularly helpful when it comes to the problem of rape. Outing a rapist in a public forum almost invariably risks accusations of slander or libel, because there is rarely concrete proof of rape that can be used in a court of law. Yet anti-rape organisations estimate that only around 3% of rape accusations are false—these forming only a small fraction of rapes that are reported at all.

These statistics demonstrate a second truism: that the older you get, the more rapists inhabit your social circles. It would be comforting to think that rapists were only violent psychopaths who we could easily identify and isolate, but there are too many for this to be universally true. Although sometimes spot-table by their sleazy remarks, groping, or open rape apologia, many of them blend into social scenes more subtly. Rapists are our workmates, our drinking buddies, our favourite musicians, people at the front of socialist rallies, queer rights advocates, and men who talk about feminism at length. Some of these people are rape victims themselves—how then to dispense justice? Such people cannot be categorised as both waif-like victims and inhumane monsters.

The narrative of rapist as unrepentant psychopath is undermined when the rapist expresses guilt, or when they genuinely didn't realise their sexual partner hadn't consented, or really did desire their partner—since sexual desire and abuse of power are not mutually exclusive. The apology from one of the Roastbusters read: “I just want people to know I am a good person at heart and I have matured and have taken this as a massive learning experience.” While these admissions are often made much of by reporters, as in the similar Steubenville rape case last year, the experiences of survivors are virtually ignored. The apology of the rapist is understood as the endpoint of making amends, rather than the beginning, and

Demands of Wellington Stop Rape Rally

End Rape Culture Now

- * Fully fund appropriate support services
- * Hold the police accountable for their victim-blaming and cover-up
- * Provide education on consent and sexual assault prevention throughout society
- * Believe survivors of rape and sexual assault

survivors who continue to experience trauma or demand further action are dismissed. When they are noticed in the media, survivors are often shamed for not responding or behaving in ways deemed acceptable, as Willie and JT did to a Roastbusters victim on RadioLive. (Trigger warning: victim-blaming, slut-shaming, rape apologia.)

Worryingly, these discourses can prevent rapists from thinking of themselves as rapists, since they have not held their victim at weapon point. Moreover, it implies that any act short of rape is socially and politically irrelevant to the crime. But rape doesn't come from nowhere, and not all aspects of rape culture are serious enough to merit a jail term. Should the man who I tried to kiss without asking have taken me down to the station for non-consensual conduct? Should I have been charged with aiding and abetting criminals when I made rape jokes at age nineteen, letting rapists in my circle know that what they'd done was not a big deal to me? The problem of rape culture doesn't only emerge when rape happens, but in micro-aggressions, poor personal boundaries, and the dreadful anticipation of the act. I didn't call the police when a man almost succeeded in attacking me on Cuba St at 2am—he was Not A Rapist, though probably only by dint of a few seconds. Nor do I call them every time an acquaintance

Rape culture



gropes me or says that my low-cut top means I don't respect myself. Police do not and cannot always press charges for routine events that form the backdrop of women's lives.

In this context, the question of whether or not the Roastbusters crew can be legally charged as rapists is irrelevant. Even if the evidence of videos and public bragging didn't exist, it would still remain clear that these men, and countless of others in this country alone, are misogynists with lax boundaries who are willing to abuse their power. The problem of rape culture is not rooted entirely in misogyny; rape also exists within the queer community, and men can be raped by women. But the cultural centring of cisgendermale perspectives

at the expense of women and trans* people forms a lot of ground for rape culture to flourish, whereby cis men are told they are entitled to our bodies. Of course, many men are outraged at the Roastbusters events, but many are also responding in patriarchal ways that exacerbate the problem. The masculine vigilante violence that has been proposed against Roastbusters' masculine violence won't stop rape from happening, or indeed help many survivors to heal.

How then to take a stand against sexual violence? Leaving aside the police, one might wonder why the friends of the Roastbusters crew didn't raise objections while their friends were drugging, raping and then publicly humiliating underrage women. People are more likely to

listen to their friends than to strangers, and cis men generally listen to cis men more than any other gender. Groups like White Ribbon have recognised this, calling on men to take a stand against the misogyny and violence that manifests in cases like Roastbusters. Ironically, it is likely that they will receive more praise than the feminist and other rights groups who have opposed sexism and rape culture for decades.

The supposed helplessness claimed by the police and others in the face of rape culture is particularly frustrating, because certain techniques, education programmes and structural reforms have been tested and proven to work in reducing rape rates. Anti-rapist advertisements in Vancouver, for example,

resulted in the number of sexual assault reports in the area dropping by 10% for the first time in several years. And as Greta Christina said, this was a one-off ad campaign; imagine what effect a sustained anti-rape movement at all levels of society could produce. On the New Zealand front, a fantastic anti-rape PSA can be found at whoareyou.co.nz, taking the viewer up to the point of sexual assault and then rewinds to show how bystanders can make a difference. It shows the rape of a drunk woman, so commonly framed as “grey rape” rather than real rape, and avoids both victim-blaming and the Evil Rapist narrative. (Trigger warning, so only watch if you’re feeling strong.)

Much of the public debate has been triggering and upsetting for rape survivors and their allies, with its framing of

rape as an abstract problem rarely seen outside a law lecture. The conceptual and sometimes judicial dehumanisation of rapists disguises the levels at which the routine violence of rape seeps into all areas of our culture. What minimalist sex education is offered at schools, usually amounting to ways to avoid pregnancy and STDs, does not equip people to understand what enthusiastic consent means, or how to deconstruct models of masculinity that encourage sexual violence and coercion. Too often rape prevention is understood as catching criminals after the act, rather than preventing trauma from being set in motion.

It’s possible that the Roastbusters affair could be a watershed moment in New Zealand’s rape culture politics. The anger around the country is widespread

and palpable; protest actions against rape culture have been organised in Wellington, Auckland, and Christchurch. Many are refusing to treat rape as a nasty but inevitable part of living in human society. The dismantling of rape culture will take time, since rape is enabled by all sorts of different institutions and social practices. But at the most basic level, the questions are: what will you do when someone you know is raped? Almost as importantly, what will you do when someone you know turns out to be a rapist, or when they display predatory characteristics? As the Who Are You ad above says, you can be the difference in how the story ends.

Anne Russell is a journalist with a long-standing interest in feminist politics, queer rights and the cultural formations of intimate relationships.

Some questions regarding rape culture in Aotearoa/NZ

This article was sent to Fightback by Bevan Morgan.

This week has not been a particularly pleasant time to live in Aotearoa. The revelation by TV3 that there has been a youth gang working at intoxicating and raping young girls and then bragging about it on the internet obviously sent some major shock waves through the country. Understandably many queries have been raised about the nature of the way the report was dealt with, and of course with the reaction, or rather lack thereof, within the New Zealand Police. Inevitably though, one of the major questions that have arisen has been regarding the idea of a rape culture in this country, and whether or not we have one in New Zealand.

The responses from both the public and the media have been illuminating to say the least, and if there was any doubt that

we had a problem with both the level of sexual assault in this country, and how it is perceived within the community, there certainly is absolutely zero doubt now. There have been some heated discussions, plenty of victim blaming, and the rise of more amateur Batman wannabes than in Kick-Ass 2. But one of the most contentious points has been on whether or not in New Zealand we have a ‘rape culture’, to which multiple people have screamed that this is not the case, and that these young guys are an anomaly to how we as a society view the larger question of rape and sexual assault. Most of this defence stems from misunderstandings of what a culture of rape and sexual assault might look like (outside of the Catholic Church or within Gang Culture for example), and is unhelpfully argued down with the simple and obvious assertion that most men aren’t rapists.

This is not an okay place to be hav-

ing such an important discussion stem from. Too often people get distracted by discussions of rape culture to understand the nuances and the human picture of the suffering. There have been an astonishing number of men getting on the defensive and the offensive this week, as if a group of sex crazed date rapists sexually assaulting girls as young as 13 is a personal slight on them individually. It is not. However, we still need to look deep inside ourselves as a society, and have a serious examination of how economic factors, cultural factors, social factors, and religious factors (amongst others) taint our perceptions of sexual assault in this country. Here are just four questions that might help people reconsider their perception of sexual abuse in New Zealand, and are important to keep in mind as we move forward to a future where instead of burying our heads in the sand, we tackle these problems head on.

Rape culture

Why is it normal that when girls go to bars that they can't leave their drink unattended?

If we didn't have a culture of rape, this wouldn't be the case. If the statistics were right on this matter then we would have just a few instances of girls having their drinks spiked and it wouldn't be like the current status quo where drink spiking is a problem in nearly every bar or nightclub, every single weekend.

Men, please just picture that for a second. Imagine if every time you went out, and you took your eyes off your drink, you had to worry about whether or not somebody had drugged it with something to make you pass out so you can be sexually violated. If this was the case, you can guarantee that men would be armed, and police presence would be heavy handed. But with our females we just accept this and warn our girls as if this is okay – as if the rapist should be just simply something to avoid in the evening like the rain, or overpriced drinks.

And here is the kicker on that point anyway – as much as drink spiking is a serious problem, we have an even bigger elephant standing in the room. The fact of the matter is that in 2008, alcohol was the date rape drug of choice in 80% of sexual assaults in New Zealand anyway. This is in a country where alcohol is so ingrained into our psyche that we actually let alcohol companies sponsor children's sports clubs amongst other things. So girls in many ways are damned if they do, and damned if they don't. They can go out with the peers in what is the generally accepted 'normal' social setting in New Zealand, and risk either having someone slip something in their drink, or have someone take advantage of them if they get too drunk. And for those who like to take the holier than thou road and say 'don't get that drunk', let us remind you that getting drunk is NOT an offence that deserves a punishment of sexual as-

sault. This is not how a society treats its women in 2013.

Why is rape so underreported in this country?

On the surface there is false authority in the idea that rape and sexual assault isn't that bad in New Zealand, because the figures show that it's not an epidemic yet. This is one of the most sinister and depressing aspects of a culture of rape. It

“ Rape and sexual assault cannot be a secret in Aotearoa anymore and we must question the very foundations of how we perceive sexual assault in order to move forward to a future where reporting isn't a case of being brave and admirable as much as it is just what you do.

implies that because we don't know for a fact the full figures that we can take a blissfully ignorant approach, and in the interests of 'objectivity' and 'rationality' we can't do anything else, because the data isn't there. And this, again just patently is not true.

The Invercargill Rape and Abuse Support Centre claimed this year that while there were only 98 reported rapes in the region between January 2011 and April 2013, their centre took on about fifteen new clients a month during this time.

In 2007 it was found by Rape Prevention Education that sexual assault was being reported about 13% of the time, and that of these reports, roughly 9% resulted in convictions.

That means that we can probably extrapolate and estimate that in the fiscal year of 2012-2013 when there were approximately 8.2 reported sexual assaults per 10,000 people in New Zealand, there was probably more like 56 per 10,000 at least. Doesn't sound like much? Well we'll keep extrapolating. If our population is four million, that equates to well over 20,000 sexual assaults in the space of a fiscal year that we can guess at. 8.2 instances of sexual assault per 10,000 is a problem, however if this does only represent 13% of actual cases then we have a full blown catastrophe on our hands.

Why is our history of sexual oppression and rape forgotten?

The whole concept of sexual assault being seen as hideous is relatively new in the history of patriarchal class societies. The Ten Commandments are orders from God on how to act on this planet and many people still believe in these. Jealousy of your neighbour warrants a mention, but there is nothing to do with sexual assault whatsoever – in other words according to God it is worse to be annoyed that your neighbour drives a BMW than it is to sexual assault one of their children.

Or how about the countless, countless stories of war atrocities where rape was served up as the first thing on the agenda for maniacal soldiers? We need to understand that by and large in the history of patriarchal class societies, this whole conception of 'consent' is actually pretty new and we still haven't cracked it yet completely. It was only in 1985 – not even thirty years ago – that it was made illegal to rape someone within a marriage. That means we have for less

than thirty years had mainstream acceptance that within marriage, the parties involved still need to consent. What was once considered a good night of sex and fighting might be now considered a night of rape and assault, because our values and perceptions change as we become more enlightened, and we evolve socially. While we have made ground in combatting these things it cannot be forgotten that by and large, throughout class societies, rape and sexual assault have not been seen as particularly bad under the law.

Why the hell are we pretending that this is only a wild youth problem?

The talkback stations have been waiting for a story like this in New Zealand, and with typical vigour and aggressiveness, they have jumped on this story, and there have been calls from both listeners and DJs that this is an on-going issue and that teenagers are out of control. But this just isn't true. Teenagers today smoke less, drink less, and drive safer than the generations that preceded them. But because the concept of sexual assault is relatively new, and because we have hid the problem out of sight and out of mind for so long, we just assume that because we hear more about it now, then it must be simply that the youth are wild.

We also know definitively that poverty, abuse, and trauma lead to drug use and alcohol dependence hugely and we know that presently in New Zealand we have abhorrent child poverty statistics whereby over 200,000 young New Zealanders live below the poverty line. So if our economic system is increasing inequality in New Zealand (which it is), and thus some children out of desperation are acting 'bad' as the statistics have predicted time and time again they will, how can we possibly even begin to frame this discussion as a problem with delinquent youths only? Why are the people who make these living situations

Why you should get involved in Fightback

We fight oppression

We are serious about actively fighting oppression based on nation, race, gender or sexuality – here and now, not just “after the revolution”. But we believe class is central to all such oppression, and therefore those struggles are linked to the broader

class struggle. We support militant direct action by Maori for real equality; conversely, we see the Treaty process as a bureaucratic means to undercut such resistance and nurture a Maori middle class which will benefit very few.

We stand for freedom

We believe that socialism means the maximum possible freedom for the many not the few. We directly challenge infringements on basic human rights such as the undemocratic use of trespass orders by universities and employers against activists and trade unionists. We have consistently op-

posed the so-called “terror raids” on left-wing and Maori activists dating from October 2007. We also practise what we preach in our own party, where members have the right to disagree and debate their differences, provided they are involved in a basic level of party activity.

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Rape culture

possible (i.e. the financial thieves, the politicians, the police, the ruling oligarchy) not receiving the same visceral anger and disrespect that our youth are facing? We are on track to have the smartest, most orderly generation yet, however they are still targeted because their voices don't count.

Additionally, sexual violence is a problem throughout all age groups, throughout all classes. The Roastbusters were sons of a police officer and a Hollywood actor. To blame youth, or working class hedonism, rather than considering the inherent problems with how we structure our very society is pig ignorant, and downright cruel. The ideas of rape culture are handed down from above, and they don't just apparate out of no-

where – they are crafted unintentionally a lot of the time and then passed down implicitly through social cues and interactions. Our youth aren't the problem. Our adults are.

There are multiple factions of the left each with their own philosophies and explanations for why things have gotten to this stage. Radical feminists may disagree with Socialists, who may in turn disagree with Anarchists and so on and so forth. But this is window dressing. The idea of looking at rape culture does not have to be an accusation that all men are rapists, and that all men are designed to rape. It is bigger than a philosophy, or who is right and who is wrong on this issue. We live in a society where there is a massive inequity

between men and women (this isn't even touching on assault for our non gender-binary comrades) in which we can make serious long term transitions to combat this problem. There is no Band-Aid, so the National party will be shit out of luck in trying to wait for this problem to blow over.

This is a delicate issue that we must treat with the utmost care and respect. But something must be done. Rape and sexual assault cannot be a secret in Aotearoa anymore and we must question the very foundations of how we perceive sexual assault in order to move forward to a future where reporting isn't a case of being brave and admirable as much as it is just what you do.

Fighting Rape Culture in Aotearoa: A Survivor's Perspective

Marika Pratley is a Wellington member of Fightback. She also volunteers for Wellington Rape Crisis, and is a survivor of rape and sexual assault.

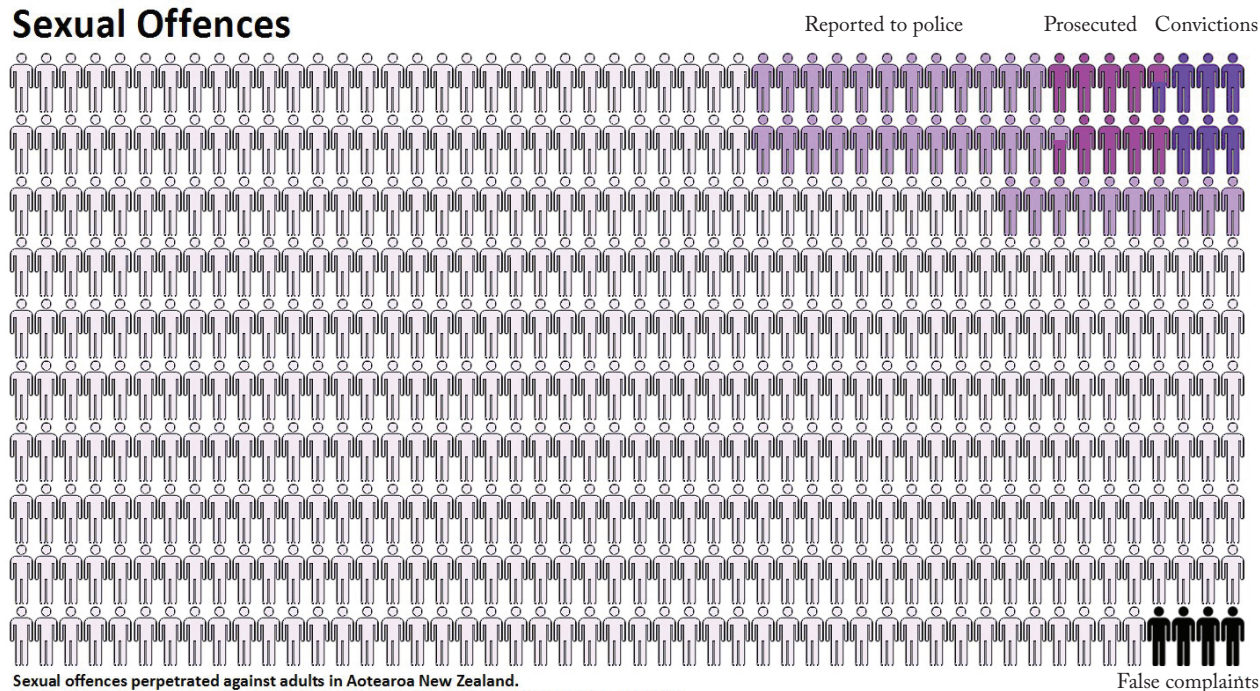
This article is based on a speech Marika presented as a survivor at the Stop Rape

Now Wellington demonstration on Saturday 16th of November 2013. Note: The original speech was improvised, this is not a transcription.

I would like to acknowledge that the

last few weeks have been triggering and overwhelming for many survivors. I myself have had moments where I could not listen to the news and had to take days off work because it was overwhelming. I am thankful to everyone who has been supportive of survivors.

Sexual Offences



I am a survivor of sexual assault and rape. I experienced sexual assault and rape for the first time when I was a preschooler. More or less my entire life I have had to deal with the consequences of this trauma, as well as learning to engage with rape culture in its various manifestations in New Zealand. These exist both on an institutional level (in the court rooms, media, etc) but also in a social and more general cultural context.

Survivor Support needs to be accessible

As a survivor, I have had to use many counselling services over years to be able to manage my recovery - which is an ongoing process. I am fortunate that I also have a highly supportive family. Having access to both these things is not something all survivors are able to experience. With the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression, there have been many times where my mental health has been severely impacted. It has been absolutely essential that I have had access to survivor support services for my recovery to be possible.

One of the first times I had problems accessing care was as a young adult. In 2009 ACC had funding cuts, and new criteria was developed for survivors of sexual abuse/violence, who needed to use ACC to subsidise counselling fees. Even with 'free services', therapists still used ACC to subsidise, since 'free services' rely on charity, trusts and grants to keep their services going. One of the major reasons I had to go back to counselling is because I was raped and sexually assaulted again as a young adult - not just once, but by 3 different people on 3 different occasions, all within a few months of each other. Not only were these new incidents that I had to 'survive', but they simultaneously retraumatized me of my previous experiences as a child, leading to some major complications in the overall trauma I

have experienced.

Although I had an ACC claims number for my childhood trauma and files on record, on the first appointment with my new therapist I had to go through an interview process to 'reactivate' my claims number. This meant I had to prove that the trauma was still impacting on my wellbeing. The interview felt like an interrogation and was highly retraumatizing. My mother who has worked as a psychiatric nurse for over 30 years, and currently holds a PhD in Mental Health Nursing, was with me as a support person and was horrified from a professional perspective. Since this interview process was introduced, many therapists and counsellors have stopped being affiliated with ACC, as it is ethically problematic, professionally questionable and retraumatizing for their clients. In a way, it is quite bizarre that Sexual Assault and Rape survivors go through the Accident Compensation Corporation to begin with when sexual violence and rape is not an accident.

Since the ACC changes, services such as Wellington Rape Crisis have also lost major government funding. This is despite the fact that they are an essential service, making care accessible for survivors. To realise how much of a problem sexual violence is in our society all we need to do is look at the statistics - one out of four women, and one out of six men are reported to be survivors of sexual assault and rape. It is concerning that the government does not prioritise the accessibility of survivor services. Sexual violence prevention education also needs to be essential/accessible within all education sectors, from primary school to tertiary education, so that young people can be challenged about their internalised ideas around rape culture, such as slutshaming and other rape mythology which justifies rape, and in some cases means some people are raping without being consciously aware of it. (I.e. having sex with someone without asking or thinking it's 'ok' because they are drunk and

wearing a short skirt).

At the moment, I currently juggle 3 casual jobs, and my therapy costs \$100 per session. Although I appreciate the long term benefits of the therapy, this financial cost adds further stress, as I struggle to get by each week (despite living in a 'single' situation). I know that me being a survivor with economic barriers to care is not unique and can only imagine what it is like for solo parents, children, and other working class folk or beneficiaries who are survivors, who lack the means to receive adequate support.

The Stigma of Being a Survivor/Rape Culture in wider society

Rape culture has enabled a stigma against survivors to develop. Not only are there bullshit rape myths which recirculate, but there is also an overlap with misogyny/'slutshaming', whorephobia and mental illness stigma. Having to deal with rape jokes, and other narratives which exploit the suffering of survivors for entertainment value, is an example of cultural norms and everyday social interactions denying the needs of survivors. Rape myths are also reproduced in the media, speculating whether a survivor actually got raped or not. The very fact that funding for survivors gets cut, while police continue to incorporate rape mythology such as 'your skirt was too short' as a part of common protocol, reinforces ideology at an institutional and material level that survivors are to be devalued. All of these ideological manifestations repeatedly reproduced, are the building blocks of the matrix which enables rape culture to exist. We need to dismantle rape culture and replace these building blocks with ones which empower survivors, and enable their recovery without this stigma attached.

USA: Socialist Alternative election campaigns create shock waves



Article by Bryan Koulouris, reprinted from Socialist World.

This article was written before the campaign results were officially announced, with Kshama Sawant winning a Council seat.

Two Socialist Alternative candidates sent historic shock waves through the United States on 6 November. Both candidates, Kshama Sawant, in Seattle, and Ty Moore, in Minneapolis, mounted the strongest election campaigns by open socialists in a major US city in many decades.

Only initial results have been announced, and more ballots are being counted in the next couple of weeks. At the moment, both races are too close to call. Moore is down by only 130 votes. Sawant is down by only 4% in the initial count of an estimated 38% of the total ballots expected, with the remaining ballots likely to trend strongly in Sawant's favour.

Regardless of the final count, the votes for these firebrand socialist candidates illustrate clearly the vacuum in US

politics and the anger at the corporate-controlled Establishment.

Rooted in the Great Recession and the shallow economic recovery, there is a tremendous distrust of the political establishment, which fuelled both campaigns. The government shutdown also stoked a popular rage that allowed the socialist campaigns to strike a real chord with working people. During the government shutdown, the approval rating for Congress slumped to a historic low of 5%. In a Gallup poll, a record-high 60% said that a new party was needed in the US, and a record low of only 26% said the two parties were doing an adequate job.

Many people in the US often feel discouraged and demoralised by the rigged pro-corporate electoral system. However, these campaigns demonstrated, beyond a shadow of doubt, that independent candidates and working-class people can challenge the Establishment without taking a dime of corporate money! Ty Moore raised more money than his main corporate-backed opponent, and Kshama Sawant raised approximately \$110,000, compared to her opponent's

\$238,196.

Socialist Alternative's campaigns showed clearly that it is possible for ordinary people and young people to organize together and fight to change the world. Socialist Alternative wants to build on this momentum for future campaigns of the 99%, like the "Fight for a \$15/hour minimum wage and a union", and the struggle to tax the super-rich to pay for a green jobs programme and mass transit.

As cuts to popular government programmes, like Social Security, are likely coming, possibly in the next few months, both corporate parties will probably see their support further undermined. Going into the 2014 mid-term elections, these socialist campaigns have shown the huge opening for independent working-class politics. Coalitions of fighting union leaders, socialists, Greens and civil rights groups should be built in every city across the country to organize movements and mount independent candidates.

These election results, along with the 'Arab Spring', the Wisconsin labour uprising, and the Occupy movement,

have made possible what seemed impossible. They are ushering in a whole new process in society. Not only are these electoral campaigns leading to the growth of a new vibrant socialist movement in the United States, but they will also serve as a model that will contribute to the eventual inevitable rise of a new party that will fight the richest 1% – a mass party of working people.

Socialist ideas on the rise

Many people on the left argue that socialist ideas cannot gain mass support in this country; these campaigns show that they are dead wrong. Pew Research Center Polls show over and over that a majority of young people and people of color now prefer “socialism” to “capitalism.” Obviously, this consciousness is confused, but it illustrates that people are fed up with growing inequality, the unbearable rises in the cost of living, and capitalism itself.

Sawant and Moore’s opponents barely bothered to resort to “red-baiting” against socialist ideas. Instead, incumbent Richard Conlin, in Seattle, used thinly-veiled anti-immigrant and sexist arguments against Sawant, while Alondra Cano, in Minneapolis, shied away from negative campaigning, preferring to rely on her support in the real estate industry and the political establishment.

Socialist ideas are clearly back on the agenda, and Socialist Alternative is uniquely positioned to help build a new socialist movement. This needs to be done by socialists being the most effective fighters for the needs of working-class people, such as a \$15 an hour minimum wage and a tax on the super-rich to fund jobs and services. Socialist Alternative has stood out on the left for our ability to connect with politicized workers with understandable language. At the same time, we honestly explain that reforms in our society can only be fully sustained if power is taken out of the hands of big business and a new socialist system based on demo-

cratic public ownership of the top 500 corporations is established.

Building movements

Ty Moore’s campaign in Ward 9 of Minneapolis was built alongside important high-profile housing justice campaigns led by Occupy Homes Minnesota. Moore and Socialist Alternative helped co-found this organization, which successfully defended many homeowners from being evicted by big banks and the police. The center of Occupy Homes’s “Foreclosure and Eviction-Free Zone” was in Ward 9, a diverse, working-class community, and both Occupy Homes and the Moore campaign mutually reinforced each other.

Likewise, in Seattle, Sawant’s campaign helped put the “Fight for 15” – strikes and protests of low-wage workers for a \$15/hour minimum wage – at the centre of political debate. Socialist Alternative energetically built this movement, aiding victimised striking workers and countering arguments against raising the minimum wage. When labour organisations placed an initiative on the ballot to raise the minimum wage to \$15 in the suburb of SeaTac, the Kshama Sawant campaign energetically supported this movement, contributing to the ballot initiative’s historic success.

Eventually, both mayoral candidates, who had not mentioned the minimum wage at the beginning of their campaigns, came out vaguely in support of a \$15/hour minimum wage. Sawant’s success at shifting the political debate prompted the Seattle Times, the largest newspaper in Seattle, to say before the election that “the winner of Seattle’s election is already the socialist Kshama Sawant.”

The labor movement

These independent working-class electoral campaigns have important lessons for the labor movement, which is facing

a serious crisis. The labor movement is under attack from big business, and the Tea Party Republicans are trying to destroy union rights altogether. However, Democratic politicians are often the ones proposing cuts, privatization and other attacks on unions, too. In this situation, the labor movement needs to regain its fighting traditions and run more of its own independent working-class candidates.

Instead, labor leaders often back Democrats either out of fear of Republicans, habit, or the fact that many labor leaders live lives of luxury that have more in common with politicians than their own members. However, the Moore and Sawant campaigns demonstrate that workers are increasingly fed up with politics as usual, and labor support can be gained by credible independent campaigns with concrete demands. Moore obtained the active support of the SEIU State Council in Minnesota which played an instrumental role in the campaign. Meanwhile, Sawant won endorsements from six union locals, and a majority of the King County Labor Council voted in favour of endorsing Sawant (narrowly missing the super-majority necessary for an endorsement).

In the coming months and years, union members will face continual attacks on their rights and living conditions. In the course of these fights, we will need to use protests, pickets, strikes and direct action to defend ourselves. Workers will have to struggle to win democratic control of their unions and elect leaders who are actually willing to resist the corporate onslaught. These battles will show the need for workers to have their own independent political representation. The Moore and Sawant campaigns show that unions can run very successful independent candidates, which should be a step towards forming a new party of the 99%.

Next steps

Many people who supported Moore

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and Sawant are breaking from the Democratic Party, but are not ready yet to fully make the break. Socialist Alternative will continue to argue within social justice movements and coalitions that the Democrats are fundamentally a party of big business, and that working-class people should not give any support to them, even candidates on their “left wing.”

We urgently need a party of working people, connected to social movements, fighting unions, community organizations, Greens and socialists. As a concrete step to get there, we should form coalitions throughout the country

with the potential to come together on a national level to run 100 independent working-class candidates in the 2014 mid-term elections. The unions who supported the Moore and Sawant campaigns and many others should run full slates of independent working-class candidates in the mid-term, state, and local elections.

United States capitalism is in a deep economic and social crisis. The political establishment is discredited, and their system of government appears broken. Deep anger is growing against inequality, racism, sexism and homophobia. Environmental destruction is worsening. The

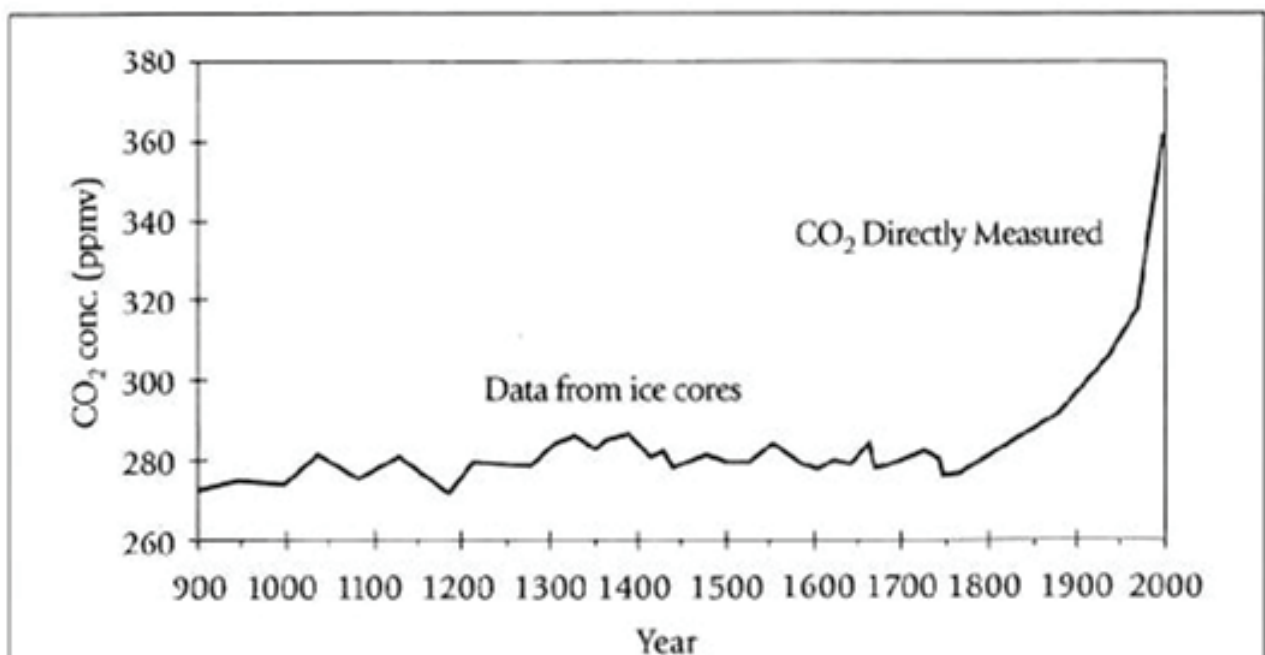
situation is crying out for an alternative.

If socialists, Greens and union leaders do not capitalise on this opening, then the right wing will. For instance, a Libertarian candidate for Virginia governor won over 145,000 votes in this election. Even worse, reports show that openly racist, far-right groups are growing.

This is an urgent situation. We need to actively build the socialist movement along with broader coalitions of the 99% to challenge the agenda of big business. The incredible election results of Ty Moore and Kshama Sawant are shining examples of the way forward.

The climate crisis

Trends in CO₂ Concentrations (Past 1000 Years)



By Wei Sun (*Fightback, Christchurch*)

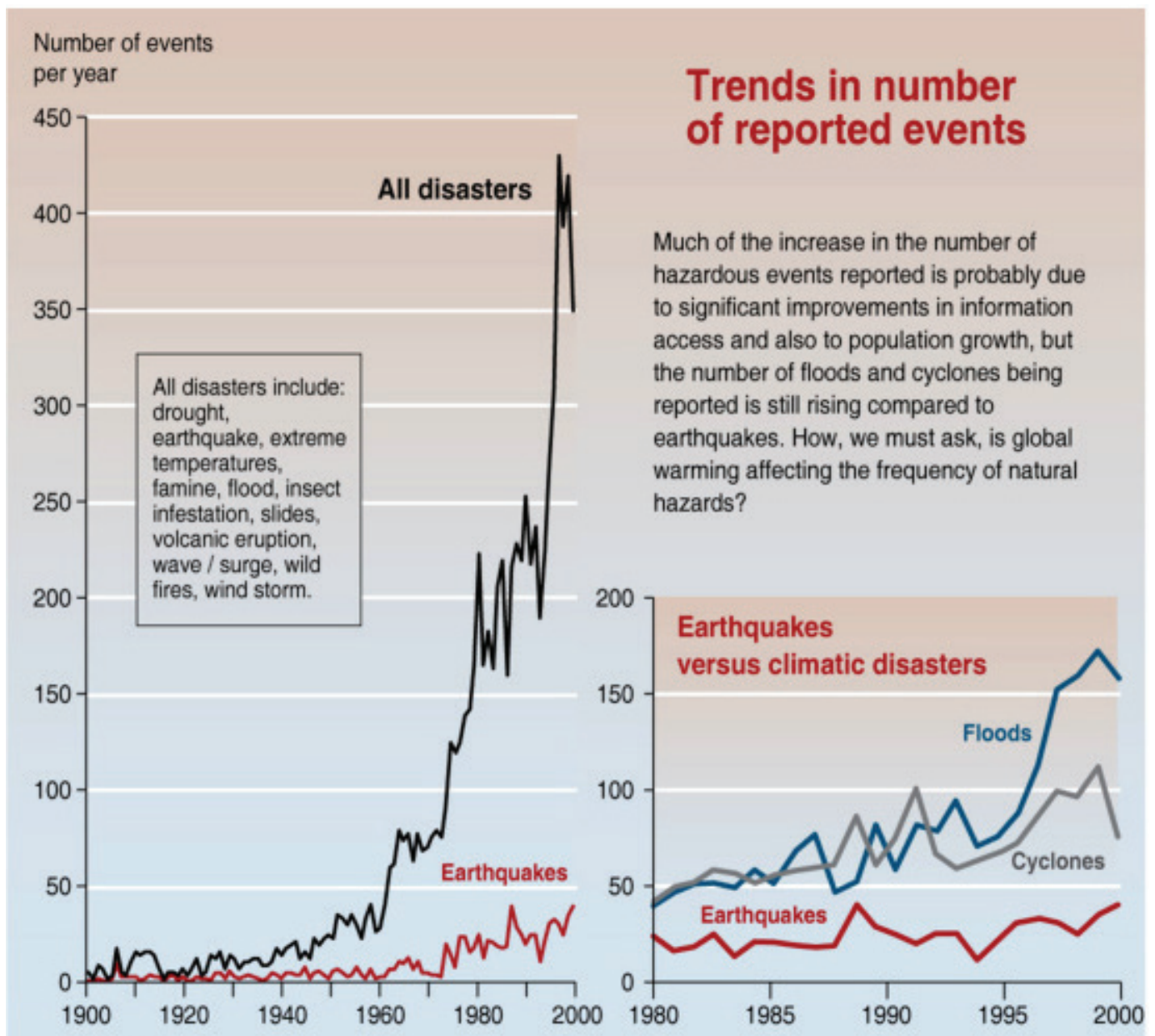
World production and consumption have been increasing rapidly in recent decades due to global ‘westernization’. While socially this can mean a higher standard of living for many in the developing world, the results are mostly negative on the local, national and global natural environment. For exam-

ple, global transportation has increased the consumption of fossil energy, causing an increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which has in turn increased the warming of Earth’s climate.

Investors want returns on their investment, so capitalism requires growth; a drive towards increased production and expansion into other ‘markets’ necessitates increased use of energy and natural resources. Greenhouse gas emissions are

treated as an externality, not factored in to a firm’s expenses.

This graph (figure 1) shows the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, measured in parts per million (PPM). Scientists now agree with 97% certainty that concentrations of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are the cause for increasing temperatures. For about 900 years, the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere remained relatively



stable, but there is a rapid increase following the industrial revolution. CO₂ in the atmosphere grew from approximately 270ppm to 390ppm between 1900 and 2000, a 44% increase. This trend appears to be increasing, with CO₂ recently reaching 400ppm. This has massive negative effects beyond just warmer weather.

Looking at this graph (figure 2), we can see that the frequency of natural disasters such as drought, extreme temperatures, famine, flood, insect infestation, landslides, wild fires and wind storms had been relatively stable for centuries, but began increasing slowly from 1900 to 1960, and then started rising rapidly. Within only 40 years, from 1960 to

2000, the number of disasters per year went up from around 30 to 425, that is an increase of more than 14 times. Much of the increase in the number of events reported is probably due to significant improvements in information access and also due to population growth, but the number of floods and cyclones being reported is still rising compared to earthquakes, which could not be affected by the climate.

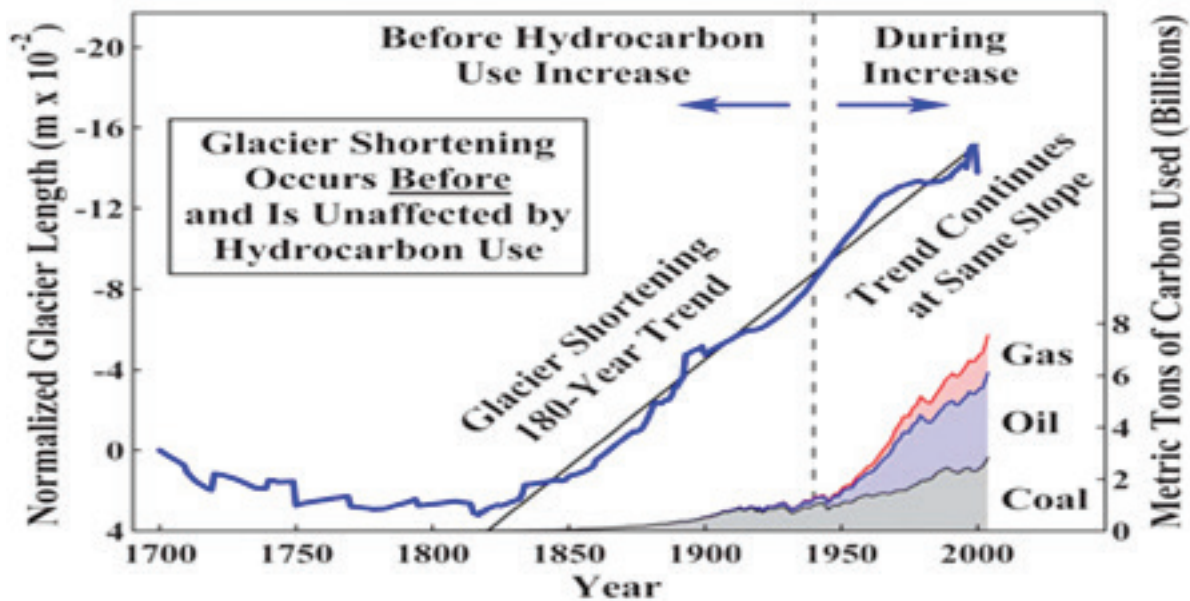
According to a case study from the Himalayas in India, a glacier will advance in a healthy climate and retreat in response to a warmer climate. Before being affected by climate change, glacier length records were at maximum from around 1700 to 1825, and then began

to decline. As we can see in the graph (figure 3) there is a massive retreat from approximately 1825 to 2000. Alarming, this trend seems to be continuing. According to the latest studies, the average glacier thickness loss is approximately 30% from 1976 to 2012.

The loss of mass from glaciers contributes to increasing sea levels, along with melting polar ice. Sea level increased approximately 20cm from 1880 to 2000. This puts low-lying countries at risk, particularly island nations. Oceanic acidity increases as the water warms, affecting the delicate balance of ocean dynamics, and putting ecosystems at high risk.

According to the *Ministry for the Envi-*

Climate change/International



ronment, the likely impacts of climate change on New Zealand include higher temperatures, though likely to be less than the global average, rising sea levels, changes in rainfall pattern (higher rainfall in the west and less in the east) and more frequent extreme weather events such as droughts (especially in the east) and floods.

Agricultural productivity is expected to increase in some areas although others will run the risk of drought and the further spread of pests; forests and vegetation may grow faster, but native ecosystems could be invaded by exotic species. It is likely that there would be costs associated with changing land-use activities to suit a new climate; undoubtedly the costs of this shift will be passed onto consumers at the

supermarket. People are likely to enjoy the benefits of warmer winters with fewer frosts, but hotter summers will bring increased risks of heat stress and subtropical diseases.

Drier conditions in some areas are likely to be coupled with the risk of more frequent extreme events such as floods, droughts and storms, rising sea levels will increase the risk of erosion and saltwater intrusion, increasing the need for coastal protection and glaciers are expected to retreat and change water flows in major South Island Rivers.

People are aware of the dangers ahead, which is why at the end of November thousands of people protested against deep sea oil drilling on beaches across Aotearoa. Deep sea oil drilling has additional problems as well (see 'The

dangers of deep sea oil drilling' in the October issue of Fightback; <http://bit.ly/18I97rW>). While it may be too late to stop the planet warming by up to two degrees, it's not too late to prevent further warming. That can be done though social movements like those behind the Banners on Beaches protests. Social movements needs to align themselves with those who will be affected the most by climate change, who tend to be among the world's most oppressed, people like Ioane Teitiotia who recently attempted unsuccessfully to become the first climate change refugee, or those affected by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. These movements can be most effective by targeting the structural causes of climate change, which lie in our economic system.



**Philippines:
'Let our people live!
Climate justice now!'**

*Statement by the Partido Lakas ng Masa
(Party of the Labouring Masses, PLM).
Reprinted from Links: International
Journal of Socialist Renewal.*

Let Our People Live! Save Lives, Re-distribute Food, Stop the Economic and Environment Plunder! Climate Justice Now!

The people are still reeling from the impact of possibly the biggest typhoon to strike the country. Death toll numbers are rising rapidly. There is huge devastation.

Many are still trying to contact their relatives, friends and comrades, but communication systems are down, in the hardest hit areas. How should we, as activists and socialists, respond to the crisis?

Firstly, we have to support and take whatever measures are necessary to protect the people. This means all measures that bring the people immediate relief.

In the hardest hit city of Tacloban, in south eastern Visayas, the people are already taking what food and relief supplies that they need from the malls. The media reports this as looting and the break-down of law and order.

But we say: let our people live. This is not “looting”. People are taking food, where they can get it, in order to survive. If there is no timely and organised support system from government, people just have to do it themselves and they should organise themselves to do it more effectively.

Even some grocery owners understand the need for this. According to one report of a man who broke into a grocery store: “The owner said we can take the food, but not the dried goods. Our situation is so dismal. We have deaths in our family. We need to save our lives. Even money has no use here now”.

Where possible, PLM will assist them to organise to take over food supplies and necessary relief goods.

Then there's the issue of the government

response. Our experience has been that it has always been too slow and inadequate. Any efforts are undermined by corruption. The exposure of the organised plunder by the political elite and sections of government, of development funds or “pork barrel” funds meant for the people, is a testimony to this.

This outraged the country and brought almost half-a-million people out in to the streets in a huge show of protest on August 26. While one plunderer has been arrested, the president has not responded decisively to clean up the system.

The public funds plundered by the elite should have been used for preventative measures to support the people weather these disasters: for infrastructure, including better sea walls and communication infrastructure; for early warning systems; for well-constructed and therefore safe public housing, to replace huts and shacks built out of dried leaves and cardboard; for health and education; for equipment and personnel for rapid emergency response, and the list is endless.

But no, this was not the case, it was eaten up by the greed of the elite classes. Unfortunately, we have no reason to believe that the government and the system will deliver and meet the needs of the people, this time round either. The self-interest of the elite, and their control of the government and the system that is designed to perpetuate their interests, through the plunder of the people's assets and resources, renders the entire set-up inutile in the face of a disaster on this scale.

Then there are our international “allies”, such as the United States government, who have sent us their best wishes. But these so-called “allies” are also responsible for the situation faced by our people.

These typhoons are part of the climate crisis phenomenon faced by the world today. Super Typhoon Haiyan (referred to as Yolanda in the Philippines) was one of the most intense tropical

cyclones at landfall on record when it struck the Philippines on November 7. Its maximum sustained winds at landfall were pegged at 195 mph with gusts above 220 mph.

Some meteorologists even proclaimed it to be the strongest tropical cyclone at landfall in recorded history. Haiyan's strength and the duration of its Category 5 intensity — the storm remained at peak Category 5 intensity for an incredible 48 straight hours.

The still-rising greenhouse gas emissions responsible for the climate crisis are disproportionately emitted by the rich and developed countries, from the US, Europe to Australia. For centuries, these rich, developed countries have polluted and plundered our societies, emitting too much greenhouse gases to satisfy their greed for profit. They have built countless destructive projects all over the world like polluting factories, coal-fired power plants, nuclear power plants and mega dams. They have also pushed for policies allowing extractive industries to practice wasteful and irresponsible extraction of the Earth's minerals.

They continue to wage environmentally destructive wars and equip war industries, for corporate profits. All of this has fast-tracked the devastation of the Earth's ecological system and brought about unprecedented changes in the planet's climate.

But these are the same rich countries whose political elite are ignoring climate change and the climate crisis. Australia has recently elected a government that denies the very existence of climate change and has refused to send even a junior minister to the climate conference in Warsaw, Poland.

The question of climate justice — for the rich countries to bear the burden of taking the necessary measures for stopping it and to pay reparations and compensate those in poorer countries who are suffering the consequences of it — is not entertained even in a token way.

International/Analysis

The way the rich countries demand debt payments from us, we now demand the payment of their “climate debts”, for climate justice and for them to take every necessary measure to cut back their greenhouse gas emission in the shortest time possible.

These rich “friends” have preached to us about our courage and resilience. But as many here have pointed out, resilience is not just taking all the blows with a smiling face. Resilience is fighting back.

To be truly resilient we must organise, fight back and take matters in to our own hands, from the relief efforts on the ground to national government and to challenging and putting an end to the capitalist system. This is the only way to ensure that we are truly resilient.

Makibaka, huwag matakot! Fight for our lives, don't be afraid!#

Donations can be sent to: Transform Asia Gender and Labor Institute

Account No. 304-2-304004562

Swift Code: MBTCPHMM

Metrobank, Anonas Branch Aurora Blvd., Project 4

Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

Email: transform.asia1@gmail.com

Mobile/cell No. +63(0)9088877702

PayPal donations can be made here: <http://transform-asia.org/>

Pseudoscience and the left: Imaginary solutions to real problems

By Daphne Lawless (Fightback, Auckland) and Byron Clark (Fightback, Christchurch).

Anyone familiar with the political Left will be familiar with well-meaning activists insisting that scientists and experts are “lying to us” about important features of our daily life, and only a dedicated band of outsiders know the truth. Activists in Aotearoa/NZ have been giving dire warnings about the fluoridation of our drinking water, and promoting pseudo-economics such as “Positive Money”. Meanwhile, the Green Party of Canada – while correctly attacking the Conservative government's climate change denial – includes unscientific “scare” data about the health risks of not only fluoridation, but also Wifi routers, in its manifesto.

“I really think the Green Party is just doing the same things everybody else does, which is to make up an idea that matches with your ideology, and then go looking for evidence to support it,” said Michael Kruse, chair of Canadian non-profit Bad Science Watch. There's a word for this – pseudoscience. And it's a problem on both the political Right and Left.

What is pseudoscience?

The skeptic website rationalwiki.com defines pseudoscience as an idea “which tries to gain legitimacy by wearing the trappings of science”, but does not in fact use the rigorous methods and standards of proof of science. In other words, it's much like a conspiracy theory. The basic idea is that “official” science is lying on one particular subject – forming a conspiracy against the general population – but the purveyors of the theory know the real truth. It looks like science, but it isn't – because the basis of the scientific method is the possibility of proving theories wrong. Pseudoscience, on the other hand, relies on fear and “what if?”s. It's based on an emotional appeal while pretending to be rational.

Anti-fluoridation and anti-vaccination campaigners have made great strides among the Left in recent times. The claims are very similar – that fluoride in drinking water, and vaccinations, are secretly dangerous to our health, and that the Government is covering this up for reasons of their own. Perhaps they're in league with big business providing fluoride or vaccines – or perhaps it's a deliberate ploy to destroy our health so we're more easily controlled.

The strange thing about this is that anti-

fluoridation began as an extreme-right belief in the United States of the 1950's. The character of General Jack D. Ripper in the film *Doctor Strangelove* was a parody of those who believed that fluoridation was a Communist plot to poison America's “precious bodily fluids”. The language is the language of the libertarian right – the right of “freedom” from government interference in our bodies and our health. It's not the language of the socialist left – the language of the common good and of the rights of communities. It's also the language of fear and guilt, rather than empowerment – note how anti-vaccination campaigners try to make parents afraid of “causing” autism in their children.

Corporate pseudoscience

Part of what makes pseudoscience very hard to fight is that, in some cases, members of the scientific establishment do lie to us, on behalf of the powerful. The most pressing example of this currently is those scientists in the pay of Big Oil and other corporate entities who deny that global warming is happening, or that, if it is happening, it's nothing to do with human activity. Similarly, Big Tobacco spent most of the 60's and 70's buying the support of

any scientist who could stomach arguing that smoking didn't cause cancer. Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical industry, a common target of pseudoscience proponents, has engaged in numerous practices that distort science – such as only publishing favourable data about drugs and expunging other tests which show more negative results. They have also conducted tests on groups different from the real-world patients who will receive the drug, who will therefore possibly experience different outcomes. These are documented in Ben Goldacre's 2012 book *Bad Pharma*.

Just as with tobacco and fossil fuel distorting science to favour their interests, the cause of these practices in the health sector is economic, not scientific. It is not science itself that is at fault – a mistaken conclusion for even legitimate critiques of the industry – but a system that puts private profit ahead of science, and the misuse of science for profit.

Political pseudoscience

Twisting science for political and financial ends goes back a long way – and not just by the prophets of capitalism. For decades, science in the Soviet Union was driven down a dead end by government support for the ideas of Trofim Lysenko – biological pseudoscience which happened to conform with Stalin's idea of how evolution “should” work.

Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution was twisted in the early 20th century into “social Darwinism” and “eugenics” – the idea that only the “strong” should be allowed to have children, and the “unfit” (the disabled, the disadvantaged, or whoever the eugenicists didn't like) should be left to die. The extreme outcome of this was the Nazi policies of extermination of the disabled, gay people and “inferior” races.

On the other hand, fundamentalist Christians have created an elaborate pseudoscience of “creationism”, to protect the privileged place of religion in the culture of the United States

against the materialistic implications of evolution. In recent decades these arguments have caught on in the Islamic world – even though Muslim scientists had anticipated the idea of biological evolution as far back as the 13th century. So both evolution and the opposition to evolution have been used in the service of pseudoscience.

Pseudoscience works backwards from real science. Real science says: we have proven this hypothesis beyond reasonable doubt, therefore we should change our behaviour. Pseudoscience says: we would have to change our behaviour if this was true, so it can't be true. Most global warming deniers start from the point of view that if human-made global warming is real, we would have to adopt socialist and green politics to preserve civilisation. And that is what the proponents of pseudoscience really want to protect – their pre-existing beliefs of how the world should work.

Is economics a pseudoscience?

The relationship of our rulers to science has changed over the decades of capitalism. In the early days of the Enlightenment, science went hand-in-hand with political and social revolution – the scientific emphasis on experiment and discovering what worked was the opposite of the aristocracy's reliance on tradition and the Church. As the British socialist Tony Cliff puts it: “the aristocrats had the Bible, the bourgeoisie had the Encyclopaedia”. When put came to shove, the Encyclopaedia won out.

Understanding how the world really worked was vital for the new capitalist class to take power, and to increase their wealth through industrialisation and technological breakthroughs. But along the way, Karl Marx developed Adam Smith's new science of economics to a point where it pointed out the limits, faults and further trajectory of the capitalist system. After that point, it became in the capitalist class's interests not to

understand how their system worked – how could they justify their power if it was based on exploitation, and doomed to ever worsening crisis?

Alfred Marshall's “marginalist” economics attempted to justify the wage and profit system with an imaginary construct called “utility” – and this is the basis of the economics of today, which increasingly resembles a pseudoscience itself. Modern capitalist economics cannot predict the future, as the global financial crisis showed. And yet, its tenets remain unchallengeable in the academy, to the point where British students have demonstrated against the continued teaching of “pre-crash economics”.

Economics has become a kind of religion, belief in which is necessary unless one be cast out as a heretic. For example, a columnist for the big business magazine *Forbes* loudly demanded that the new socialist city councillor in Seattle, Kshama Sawant, be banned from teaching economics – a subject in which she has a PhD – because she doesn't believe in the capitalist version. Science can prove itself in practice and has nothing to fear from opposing views – pseudoscience can only rely on force and rhetoric.

The retreat of the modern capitalist class from science is also shown by the growth of non-rational modes of thought in business. Although scientific psychology is used to make workers more productive and to market goods to consumers, businesspeople and sales staff alike increasingly embrace magic, “the power of positive thinking”, wish-fulfilment fantasies like *The Secret*, pseudo-philosophies like Ayn Rand's Objectivism, and other non-rational ways to convince themselves that they “deserve” their privilege and power. And since the beliefs of our rulers are generally the beliefs of society, it's no surprise that superstitious beliefs have become increasingly popular throughout society since the high point of rationalism in the 1950s.

Analysis

Science as oppression

Although science is potentially one of the greatest allies of the oppressed, given all of the above, working people, women, LGBT and other oppressed peoples have no reason to trust the “scientific establishment”. A classic example of oppression by scientists is the Tuskegee syphilis experiment. Between 1932 and 1972, the US Public Health Service gave fake “health care” to African Americans with syphilis, so as to monitor the progress of the disease as the test subjects sickened and died. To this day, the memory of Tuskegee discourages African-Americans from participating in medical science.

When oppressed people lose faith in science as practiced by their oppressors, or in their traditional practices, creative pseudoscience tends to spring up. Beliefs which are in fact ridiculous, but conform with “common sense” and the life experience of the oppressed, are a comfort and a source of inner strength – in the same manner as religious observance.

Like religious beliefs, true believers in pseudoscience will respond to criticism of their beliefs with angry attacks rather than debate. The argument will be framed as a choice between “official science” and pseudoscience – without any suggestion that the truth might lie elsewhere. For example, criticise the pseudo-medicine of homeopathy, and you’ll get angry comments that you must be a “skill” for the Western medical profession – whom any good lefty can tell you are the Bad Guys.

Pseudoscience – like its cousin, conspiracy theory – arises because it looks good and makes sense, given our everyday experience of the world. Of course fluoride is probably a poison if “they” are putting it in our water supply! Or, of course the money system is the problem with capitalism, which would be fair otherwise! It’s also much easier than real science – because the goal is not to establish truth, but to create fear,

uncertainty, and doubt.

Against imperialist rationalism

Skepticism as a social movement has grown significantly in recent years, with the Internet allowing pseudo-scientific claims to be debunked almost instantaneously. Yet this movement has not appealed to oppressed groups. Magicians Penn Jillette and Teller spread critical thinking through their long running TV series *Bullshit!* (which aired in New Zealand on Prime) but their right-wing libertarian political views meant their flavour of skepticism was one linked to individualism and shying away from any social theory that might add an extra dimension to the critique.

Ironically enough, Penn and Teller also peddle pseudoscientific global warming denial. It’s no coincidence that other proponents of atheism and the scientific method, such as Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, have also strayed from an opposition to religion and pseudoscience into racist, sexist and pro-imperialist positions.

The hardcore rationalism espoused by many skeptics, not only defending science but suggesting that all other forms of thought are illegitimate, ignores the fact that non-rational modes of thought are an important part of what it means to be human. Psychology, culture and art are based on intuitive, associated and other non-rational modes of thought – outside the domain of science, but not necessarily in conflict with it.

Similarly non-Western ways of thinking – such as tikanga Maori, Chinese traditional medicine or other “lifeworlds” – though often non-rational, play an important cultural and psychological role in binding marginalised and oppressed communities together, and a source of resistance to capitalist oppression backed up by “instrumental rationality” – science in the service of exploitation.

In fact, the place where non-Western

beliefs become pseudoscience is the place where they have been appropriated and commodified by the “alternative medicine” industry. Concepts such as the Chinese qi and various Native American practices have been ripped out of their cultural contexts and are peddled to the middle-class as pseudo-scientific remedies for the ailments of life under capitalism.

Science for the oppressed

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels described their political and economic programme as “scientific socialism”, to distinguish it from the various brands of “utopian socialism” – which would paint a glorious picture of an imagined future free from want or oppression, but would give no clues on how to get there from here. “Scientific” meant that – as far as they were concerned – communist politics grew out of what was happening here and now, and could precisely identify how elements of the present could create a better future.

It is in this sense that science – or more rightly, the scientific method – is our greatest ally. The scientific method – including rigorous “double-blind” testing and peer review free from ideological bias – is the best way that humanity has found for gaining understanding of and power over our environment. That it has been misused and warped to increase oppression is not a problem with the method itself, any more than the nuclear bomb proves that particle physics is wrong.

Socialists and other critical thinkers on the political left should stand with the movements against pseudoscience, which is non-rationality disguised as rationality – and that includes a lot of what our rulers want us to believe is “science”, like their mumbo-jumbo economics. But if non-rational thinking is demonised as the source of all our problems, then it’s people of colour, non-Western civilisations and women – traditionally associated with the Other

of the Enlightenment – who end up first in the firing line.

Defending “science” without separating the method from the oppression committed in its name leads to a reactionary defence of the current capitalist-imperialist world order. We need to show

those outside the left that we are not all vaccine denying fluoride fear-mongers, and the leftist adherents of pseudoscience that we can support science without supporting the racism, sexism and imperialism committed in its name.

Real science can free us – pseudoscience

can only give us justifications for our own slavery. It backs us into dead ends, tilting at false enemies and distracting us from the real one. It is an imaginary solution to a real problem, to which the scientific method is a major part of the real solution.

Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will: Gramsci's relevance today

By Ian Anderson (*Fightback*, Wellington).

In Aotearoa/NZ in 2013, revolutionary socialism seems impossible. Many believe that exploitation, ecological destruction, and greed are inevitable; as Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek puts it, “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”

Capitalism is ‘hegemonic,’ dominant throughout society, even in the ideas of people who want to see social change. In this context the theory of *ideological hegemony*, developed by Antonio Gramsci in the early 20th century, still has relevance nearly a century later.

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian revolutionary socialist who lived from 1891 to 1937, and became active in socialist politics from 1916. Around this time VI Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and others broke with the Second International – at that time the dominant international organisation of socialists.

Leaders of the Second International had opted to support the imperialist slaughter of World War I. Rather than fighting for socialist, internationalist politics here and now, these leaders argued that economic struggle would inevitably lead to socialism at some point in the future.

Responding to the 1917 Russian revolution, Gramsci praised Lenin and the Bolsheviks for breaking with this lifeless orthodoxy in favour of meaningful social practice;

[The Bolsheviks] are not ‘Marxists’, that’s what it comes down to: they have not used the Master’s works to draw up a superficial interpretation, dictatorial statements which cannot be disputed. “They live out Marxist thought... In this kind of thinking the main determinant of history is not lifeless economics, but man; [sic] societies made up of men, men who have something in common, who get along together, and because of this civility they develop a collective social will.”

Gramsci participated in the 1921 formation of a new Italian Communist Party, and was active in the Communist Party until his imprisonment by Mussolini’s fascist regime in 1926. His most famous and influential writings were written in prison, now known simply as the ‘Prison Notebooks.’

Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks explored Italian cultural and social history, but the goal was more expansive. Whereas many of Gramsci’s journalistic writings outside prison by his admission “were written with the day and were supposed to die with the day,” his Prison Notebooks were intended as a more general historical exploration, even an “absolute historicism.” This absolute historicism is a toolbox to be adapted to changing circumstances and historical conditions, with the unifying aim of overthrowing ruling-class power.

Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks developed his theory of hegemony, his most

influential theoretical contribution. This was a development of Marx and Engels’ theory of the state, which held that the state ultimately serves the ruling class, by stabilising capitalism. Even by recognising demands such as the eight hour work day, the state prevents the capitalist system from collapsing through its own internal contradictions. As Engels argues in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*:

As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check... it is as a rule the state of the powerful, economically dominant class.

Although Gramsci was a Leninist, his theory of hegemony has distinct observations from Lenin’s theory of state and revolution, dealing more extensively with ideological and cultural struggles in non-revolutionary conditions.

Russia’s Tsarist regime relied heavily on direct repression; massacres of workers and peasants who fought back. However, more developed capitalist states (particularly in the imperialist world) have a more sophisticated system for maintaining hegemony.

In non-revolutionary conditions, such as Aotearoa/NZ in the 21st century, the ruling class ensures hegemony through a combination of *coercion* and *consent*. Consent operates by meeting some needs, and through ideology; a system of ideas that justifies continued exploitation and oppression. While civil society ensures consent, political society applies coercion, or in Gramsci’s words:

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State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion.

This is a carrot and stick approach; consent is the carrot, coercion is the stick. The army and the police force apply direct coercion where necessary; using guns, batons, pepper spray, tasers, prison cells when workers and the oppressed get out of hand. However much of the time, guns are unnecessary, as the system relies on consent, through an ideological system that justifies capitalist rule.

Capitalism is hegemonic within trade unions, political parties, churches, media institutions and other civil society bodies. Particularly in non-revolutionary times, the dominant forces within most of these organisations lead towards collaboration with the state to ensure consent, to direct discontent into appropriate channels.

This may sound like a conspiracy theory, but any sustained engagement with civil society bodies, such as trade unions and community sector organisations, will show their limitations. Queer support organisations rely on state funding and grants, limiting their ability to openly challenge government policy, let alone the ruling order which leads many queer/trans* youth to suicide or homelessness. Trade unions must compromise with employers to settle disputes, for example the Public Sector Association agreeing to redundancies in exchange for defeating a wage freeze attempted in late 2009.

To counter these pressures, Gramsci argues for a long-term war of position, a protracted cultural struggle in preparation for the *war of manoeuvre*, a revolution or frontal assault on the state. Gramsci notes that while frontal assault on the state was appropriate for Russia in 1917, “war of position... was the only form possible in the West,” because civil society is more developed.

In waging a war of position, socialists must develop a *counter-hegemony*. He-

gemony operates through ideology, and through meeting needs, in ways that justify the prevailing system. Counter-hegemonic projects seek to construct a new hegemony, by formulating ideas and meeting needs in ways that sustain an oppositional culture.

This encompassing cultural struggle is the point of departure for ‘Gramscian’ approaches, particularly popular in academia. These approaches note Gramsci’s “anti-economism,” and emphasis on encompassing ideological struggle, as points of departure for a Gramscian approach, suggesting that “wherever power exists, opposition to it will emerge.”

For example, in her essay “Ideology, Hegemony and Inequality” published in *Studies in New Zealand Social Problems* (1990), Allanah Ryan notes the importance in a Gramscian approach of not simply seeking “narrow interests,” but incorporating “popular views” of various groups. Working in early 1990s Aotearoa/NZ, Ryan suggests “women’s rights and peace issues” as subjects that any meaningful counter-hegemonic bloc must address.

Gramsci’s ideas have been widely abused and taken out of context. In his 1977 article Gramsci versus Eurocommunism, International Socialist Chris Harman suggested that while Gramsci died in prison after years of ill treatment, “he has suffered more misfortune since his death from the distortion of his ideas by those who have nothing in common with his revolutionary principles.”

Harman details the role of Stalinism in distorting Gramsci’s ideas. When the Italian Communist Party got hold of the Prison Notebooks, they were not published for ten years. When the Communist Party finally published the Prison Notebooks, they were heavily censored, in Harman’s words, “to present Gramsci as the loyal Stalinist par excellence.”

In reality, Gramsci had become increasingly critical of the Stalinist turn in the world communist movement, particularly the ‘Third Period’ which saw

a sectarian turn against reformists in the working class movement. Gramsci had returned to the idea of tactical unity with other working-class forces while retaining an independent communist organisation, recommended by Lenin in 1921. However, the Italian Communist Party sought to use Gramsci’s name in death to shore up their sectarianism.

In the early 1960s, the Italian Communist Party published Gramsci’s full works uncensored. After Stalin’s death, many Western Communist Parties took a sharp turn away from the sectarianism of the Third Period towards accommodation with ruling Western regimes. At this point the Italian Communist Party used Gramsci’s work, particularly his criticism of the Stalinist Third Period, to justify their ‘historic compromise’ with the ruling regime in Italy.

This laid the basis for what became known as Eurocommunism, defined by compromise with dominant political order. Eurocommunists came to defend the existing Social Contract, rallying to the defence of existing democratic institutions tied to capitalism.

However, socialism cannot come through defence of declining democratic institutions, through voting Labour or joining your union. Although engagement with institutions is necessary, the system is ultimately broken. Socialism can only come through sustained independent opposition in every sector; in the electoral, workplace, campus, community sectors; and the formation of a historic bloc bringing these struggles together in unified opposition to the ruling order.

Gramsci’s revolutionary work was centred on the Turin factory council movement, democratic bodies of workers which sought control over production. In the 21st century West, the Occupy movement has offered a glimpse of what this direct democracy could look like, particularly Occupy Oakland’s combination of a radical, democratic commune with militant industrial tactics in the port.



The Italian Communist Party in Gramsci's period also contested elections, with the intention in his words "to rip the democratic mask from the double face of the bourgeois dictatorship and show it in all its horror and its repugnant ugliness." In non-revolutionary conditions, counter-hegemonic engagement in official politics such as elections must always be oppositional. There are no short-cuts, and by entering into capitalist govern-

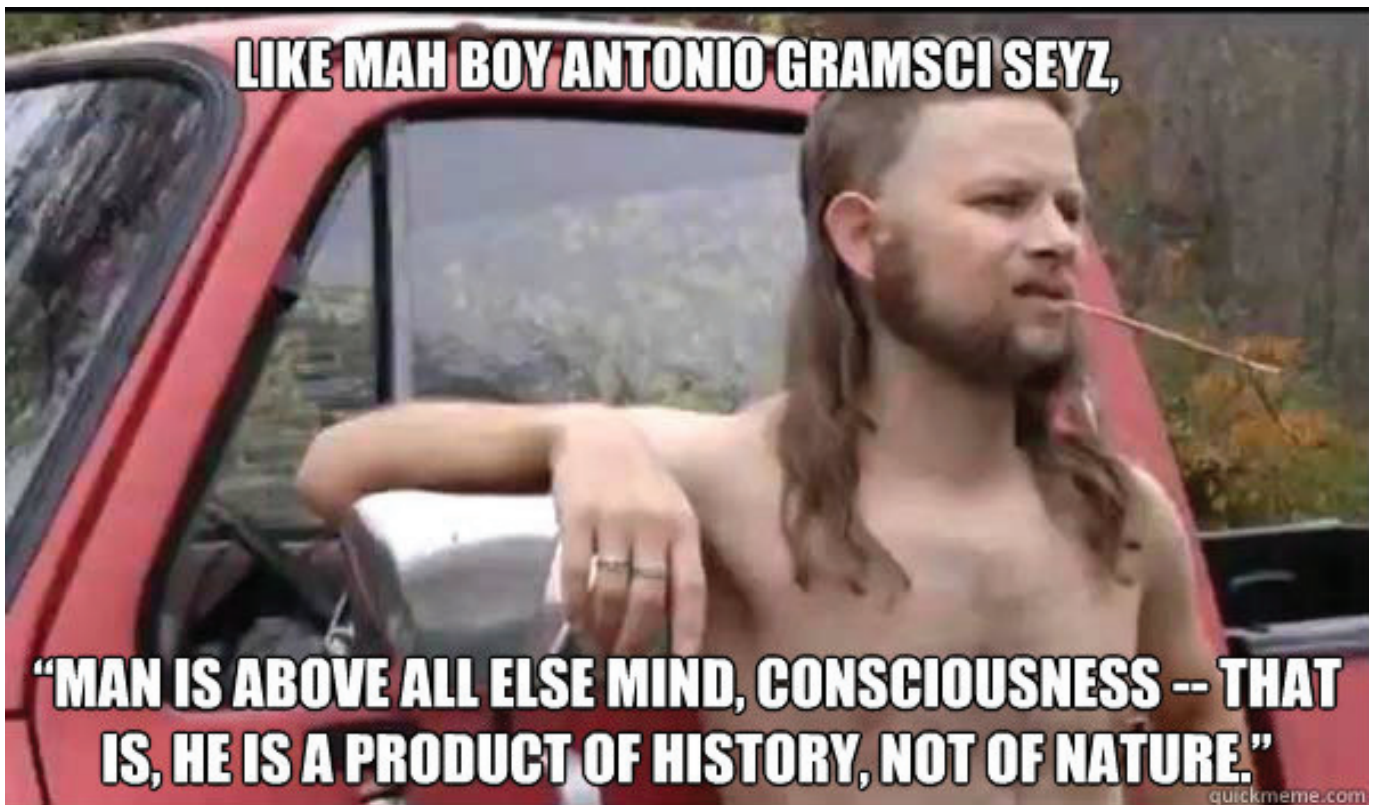
ments, we run the risk of sacrificing long-term strategy. Community-based organisation can both win concrete reforms, and lay the basis for winning peoples' power.

Today many 'Gramscians' have no meaningful connection with attempts to develop a new communist practice, instead using the notion of a protracted cultural struggle, a "march through the

institutions," to justify their turn away from revolutionary politics. While the first generation of Eurocommunists had used Gramsci to justify a 'historic compromise' with liberal democracy, many current Gramscians abandon even the superficial trappings of openly communist politics.

In a particularly revolting UK example, "social entrepreneurs" The B Group

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grouped around capitalist Richard Branson appropriate Gramsci's call for cultural struggle, without any notion of abolishing private property and exploitation. Subtler examples abound throughout academia, with liberal academics speaking of "hegemony" and "counter-hegemony" totally divorced from anti-capitalism.

This confirms one of Gramsci's key ideas; most intellectuals operate as functionaries, mechanically serving the ruling order. Stalinist politicians, academics, "social entrepreneurs" and others have claimed Gramsci's argument for a protracted cultural struggle, while divorcing it from anti-capitalist politics.

In his Prison Notebooks, Gramsci referred to revolutionary socialism as the "philosophy of praxis." Praxis is the combination of theory with practice; ideas tested through action, action developed through reflection. In *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire defines praxis this way:

Reflection without action = verbalism

Action without reflection = activism

Action + reflection = praxis

Criticising establishment intellectuals, Gramsci argued the need for the fusing

of revolutionary intellectual work with popular philosophy. *Organic intellectuals*, thinkers from within the working class and oppressed groups, must play a key role in forging this new revolutionary consciousness; or to use a more contemporary slogan, "nothing about us without us."

Gramsci himself was an organic intellectual, a worker from a poor background – unlike Marx, Engels, Lenin and other revolutionary leaders who had betrayed their privileged class origins and committed themselves to revolution. Although it is not enough, lived experience of oppression is crucial to the collective process of developing revolutionary consciousness.

Gramscian cultural approaches contrast with the 'mechanical materialism' often associated with vulgar Marxism. 'Mechanical materialism' denies lived experience of oppression, and the complex relationship between culture and lived experience, in favour of lifeless economic determinism.

Revolutionary consciousness must be rooted in local conditions, in the memory of the class. We must study our own environment, our own history, our

own place in society. An encompassing cultural struggle must draw lessons and knowledge from intersecting struggles; worker, student, queer, feminist, indigenous, anti-imperialist and ecological struggles among others.

Ultimately, Gramsci argued, social forces must be brought together in the 'Modern Prince,' a new collective revolutionary vanguard, or communist party. While this organisation immerses itself in the immediate struggles of the workplace, and the wider community, it maintains its independent opposition to the existing state structure. As phrased by US group INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence, "the revolution will not be funded."

The possibility of a new communist vanguard seems remote today in Aotearoa/NZ, just as the Bolsheviks did not predict the generalised strike action that led to the 1917 Russian revolution. However, we can only forge an egalitarian society through meaningful commitment to the praxis of revolutionary socialism.

Paraphrasing Gramsci, we need pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.